

Celebrate the King James Bible

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**The Gospell off
Sancte Ihon.
The fyrst Chapter.**



In the begynnynge
was that worde: and
word was with god: and
was thatt worde. The
was in the begynnynge
god. All thyngs were made
it: and wih out it: was
noo thig: that made was.

And remember what came before

The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER
Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest
Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
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Inquiring Words

Worship is a patchwork quilt

Worship is a patchwork quilt of people of different shapes, different characters, different sizes, different prejudices, different colours, different enthusiasms, different ages, different moods: all arranged, sometimes higgledy-piggledy, sometimes in arranged groups, sometimes half-higgledy and half-arranged, sometimes crazy.

Worship is a patchwork quilt of patchwork people, joined sometimes by one sewer, sometimes by a principal sewer and assistants. Sometimes worship is a quilting bee.

Worship is a patchwork quilt with quilting stitches which are sung, spoken, silent, and felt.

Worship is a patchwork quilt with quilting lines stitched counterpoint to the pattern of the patchwork; quilting lines which are sometimes arranged according to common themes of sorrow and sorry, or delight and dedication - the lines of common worship. Sometimes a special quilting theme is stitched counterpoint - a topical concern, a human condition, a where/why/how? question. Sometimes quilting lines just happen, just emerge unplanned - light in the first hymn found its unseen echo in the last.

Worship is a patchwork quilt to creep under from the cold of solitariness, fear and partialness, and to experience the quilt's warmth of companionship, wholeness and love. It is to leave the quilt's warm cosiness for the openness, opportunity and challenge of the wider world in which we live.

Worship is a patchwork quilt - a whole in which the many become one while keeping their individual identities - a patchwork quilt in the vast inter-dependent patchwork of creation.

Patchwork God bless us now.

— Andrew M Hill

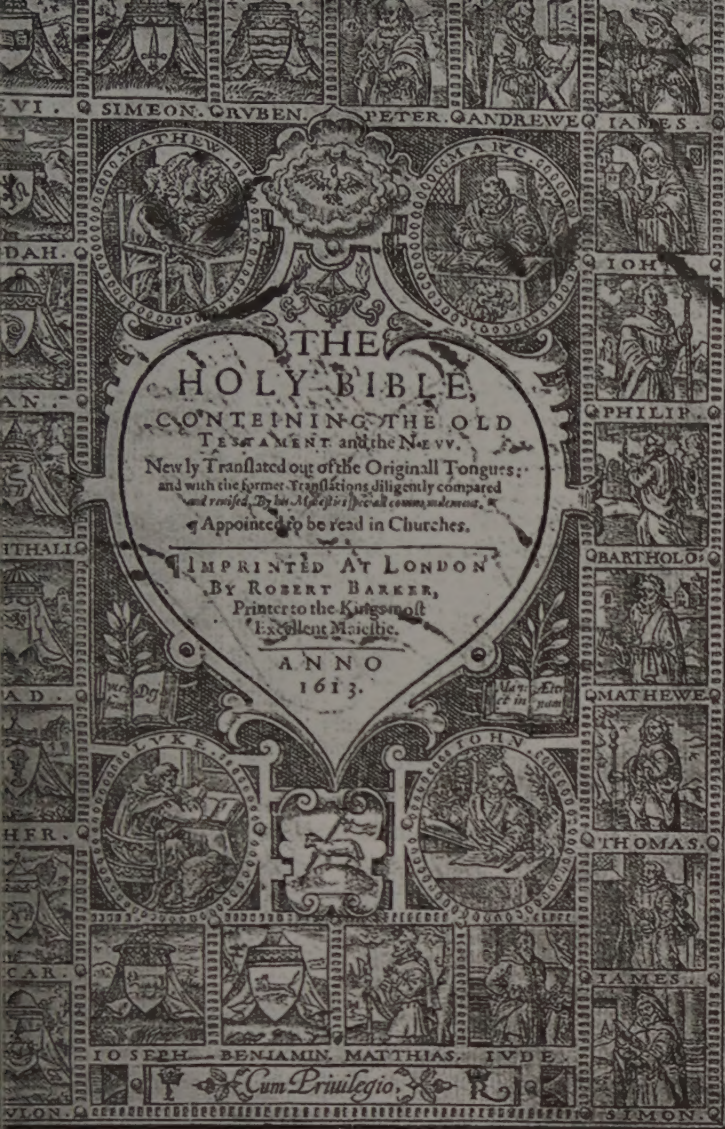
Faith in Words

The annual issue of worship material is coming up in August. Please send in prayers, addresses, meditations, photographs – anything which is an expression of your faith – to *The Inquirer*. The double issue is one of the most popular of the year. New contributors are most welcome.

For more information or to submit material, email:
Inquirer@btinternet.com

Material is due by 19 July.

Cover information: The beginning verses of the Gospel of John, from a facsimile edition of William Tyndale's 1525 English translation of the New Testament. Photo by Kevin Rawlings/Wikimedia



TO THE MOST
HIGH AND MIGHTIE
PRINCE, JAMES BY THE GRACE
OF GOD KING OF GREAT BRITAIN,
France and Ireland, Defender of
the Faith, &c.

THE TRANSLATORS OF THE
BIBLE, with Grace, Mercie, and Peace, through
IESVS CHRIST OUR LORD.

GREAT and manifold were the blessings (most dread Sovereign) which Almighty GOD, the Father of all Mercies, bestowed upon us the people of ENGLAND, when first he sent your Maiesties Royall person to rule and raigne over us. For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well unto our SION, that upon the setting of that bright Occidentall Starre Queene ELIZABETH of most happie memorie some thicke and palpable cloudes of darkness should have overshadowed this Land, that men should have beene in doubt which way they were to walke, and that it should hardly be knowne, who was to direct the vnsettled State: the appearance of your MAIESTY, as of the Sunne in his strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmised mists, and gaue vnto all that were well affected, exceeding cause of comfort, especially when we beheld the gouernment established in your HIGHNESSE, and your hopefull Seed, by an vndoubted Title, and this also accompanied with Peace and tranquillitie, at home and abroad.

But amongst all our Ioyes, there was no one that more filled our hearts, then the blessed continuance of the Preaching of GODS sacred Word amongst vs, which is that inestimable treasure, which excelleth all the riches of the earth, because the fruite thereof extendeth it selfe, not onely to the time spent in this transitory world, but directeth and disposeth men vnto that Eternall happinesse which is borne in Heauen.

A 2

Then

Rediscovering the English Bible

The words on the *Inquirer* cover were not written by King James's translators. They were lifted from an earlier, heroic version of John's Gospel. **Cliff Reed** says perhaps we should celebrate that oft-forgotten translator.

As you will no doubt have heard by now, this year sees the 400th anniversary of the most influential book in the English language, namely, the 'Authorised', or 'King James', Version of the Bible. Both terms are misnomers. It was never actually 'authorised' by King James I, as Supreme Head of the Church of England, and received no royal seal. And still less did King James have anything to do with translating it! Indeed, it isn't really a true translation, in the sense of being the original work of scholarship that rendered the Old and New Testaments into English from their original Hebrew and Greek respectively. It should more properly be called a recension. In other words, it is primarily a composite edited version of earlier translations. Relatively little new translation work went into it and those who worked on it were revising, not always for the better, the work of others.

When James I, newly-come to the English throne, called a confer-

ence of scholars and divines at Hampton Court in January 1604, it was for the purpose of resolving arguments between the principal factions in the Church of England. A new version of the Bible wasn't even on the agenda. It was raised almost at the end by the leading representative of the Puritan party, John Rainolds, the president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. What was agreed, and approved by the King, was that teams of scholars, working in Oxford, Cambridge and London, would work on a revision of the English Bible. When it was completed and published in 1611 it was 'appointed' to be read in churches. The King did not put his name to it and may not even have been altogether happy with it, because of its true provenance. So what was its true provenance?

At the Hampton Court conference, the King had said that the panels of scholars should take as their template the so-called Bishop's Bible of 1568. This was itself a revision of the so-called Great Bible, ordered to be put in churches by Henry VIII in 1539. But this had really been an 'establishment' revision of the so-called Matthew's Bible, which, in turn, leant heavily on the work of Miles Coverdale amongst others. Coverdale was responsible for publishing the first complete English Bible in 1535. The panels working on what became known as the Authorised Version, although told to work from the Bishop's Bible, also made use of a much better and more popular version known as the Geneva Bible. The Geneva Bible was the work of English Protestant exiles who had taken refuge in that city to escape persecution during the reign of the fanatically Roman Catholic

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Tyndale survives in Bible prose

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Queen, Mary I, also known as 'bloody Mary'. The Geneva Bible, of which King James disapproved because of its Presbyterian origins, was the most widely-used English Bible in the later 16th century – and for quite a few years after that, the Authorised Version notwithstanding.

Testament to Tyndale

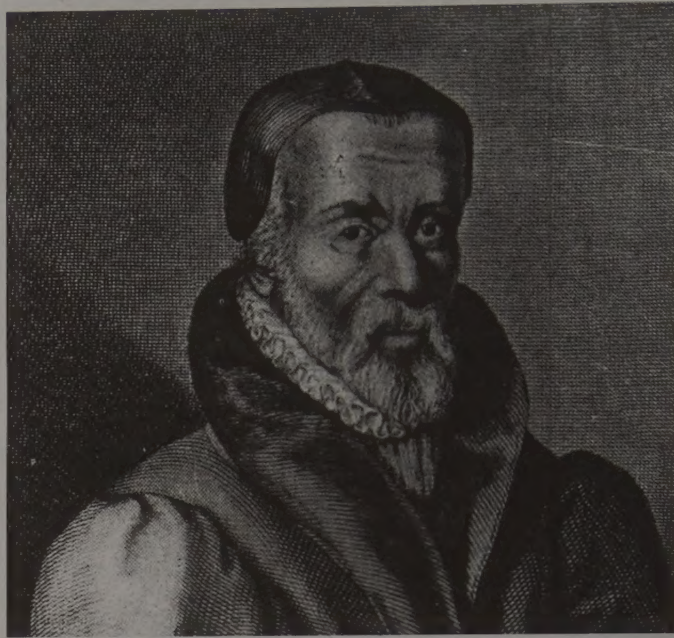
It will be seen, then, that the Authorised Version of 1611 had plenty of history behind it, and incorporated the work of many earlier scholars. But there is one name that I haven't mentioned yet but which should really take precedence over all the rest, and that is the name of William Tyndale. Tyndale was the first to translate the New Testament into English from the original Greek – a task he undertook twice. He would have completed his translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew, had he not been burned at the stake as a 'heretic' first. Tyndale's work was done while he was almost continually on the run. In England and on the Continent he was pursued by the Roman Catholic authorities both for his defiance of Rome and for his commitment to making the Scriptures available to the English people in their own language. He once told a meeting of Roman Catholic scholars, 'I defy the Pope and all his laws,' and, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost.'

In 1526 he produced his first New Testament. It was in a handy pocket size and its English was direct and vernacular, such as could be read and understood by that 'boy that driveth the plough'. Printed abroad and smuggled into England in the days when King Henry VIII was still loyal to Rome, Tyndale's New Testament was met by the full fury of Church and State. Copies were intercepted or confiscated and publicly burned at St. Paul's Cross. In 1534, he produced his second translation of the New Testament. He also translated the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible – in 1530. When Tyndale's friend, John Rogers, produced the so-called Matthew's Bible in 1537, he incorporated Tyndale's New Testament and Pentateuch, while the nine books from Joshua to II Chronicles are almost certainly Tyndale's work too. Tyndale also translated the book of Jonah in 1531.

A fugitive from Henry VIII

And all the time that Tyndale was doing this work he was a fugitive in hiding, with Henry VIII's Chancellor, the less-than-saintly Sir Thomas More, directing the pursuit. Finally betrayed and arrested, Tyndale was imprisoned at Vilvorde, near Brussels, for 16 months and then burned at the stake on 6 October 1536. By this time, things had changed in England. Thomas More had himself fallen and been put to death, but it was not enough to save Tyndale.

William Tyndale was, without doubt, one of the most important – if not *the* most important – figures in the English Reformation, and yet to this day he isn't recognised as such. Even though his Bible translations lie behind all those that followed them up to and including the Authorised Version of 1611, we rarely hear his name mentioned. Because he was condemned as a 'heretic', and because he was persecuted and pursued by the agents of Henry VIII, later Church authorities and later monarchs – like James I – refused to give him his due. And yet, when we read the New Testament, and much of the Old,



William Tyndale, portrait from 'Foxe's Book of Martyrs' in the language of the Authorised Version, we are more often than not reading the words of William Tyndale's translation or slight revisions of it. For example:

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God: and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it, was made nothing that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

That is Tyndale's opening to John's gospel. With only slight changes – the substitution of 'him' for 'it' – the scholars of 1611 lifted it word for word from Tyndale's translation of 1534. Many other examples could be given, the editors of the Authorised Version having inherited his work either directly or via other 16th-century versions, most notably the Geneva Bible, which was used by such figures as William Shakespeare and John Milton.

Tyndale wrote for masses

A difference between Tyndale's translation and the Authorised Version lies in its tone. Tyndale was translating for that ploughboy, but the Authorised Version was, as it states, 'Appointed to be read in churches.' It is thus rather more formal – more 'churchy' – and so harks back to the pre-Reformation Latin Bible known as the Vulgate. An example is Paul's great hymn to love, 1 Corinthians 13. The Authorised Version doesn't use the word 'love' at all, but instead it talks about 'charity' – '...and the greatest of these is charity.' But the Greek original doesn't use the word 'charitas' (χαριτας), which lies behind the English 'charity', but rather something altogether warmer, namely, 'agape' (αγαπη). 'Love' is a truer translation, but its sense of intimacy, equality, and personal warmth was not, it seems, what James I and at least some of his team of scholars favoured.

All the modern translations use the word 'love', and have done since the late 19th-century Revised Standard Version, and one might be forgiven for thinking that the word 'love' was introduced as part of a modernising process, but if we go back to Tyndale's translations of 1526 and 1534, what do we find?

(Continued on next page)

for all readers

(Continued from previous page)

Though I spake with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet had no love I were even as sounding brass: or as a tinkling cymbal.

And so it continues through:

Though that prophesying cease, or knowledge vanish away, yet love falleth never away.

Tyndale uses the word 'love' throughout this sublime spiritual text, finishing with the words:

Now abideth faith, hope and love, even these three: but the chief of these is love.

Bible is cultural cornerstone

The Authorised Version of the Bible is undoubtedly a masterpiece – but not just of literature, which was never meant to be its true purpose. Its purpose was to be the Word of God in the words of the English language. Nevertheless, it still stands as one of the cornerstones of our culture, and that of the entire English-speaking world. We are right to celebrate its 400th anniversary, but we should do so advisedly. We should not fall into the trap of idolising it and supposing that it was, or is, the first or last word in translating the Bible into English. Its production in 1611 owed much to politics and the official desire to make the Bible supportive of Church and State, and rather less the property of the people, as Tyndale had intended. Nonetheless, enough of Tyndale's work – and that of people like John Rogers, Miles Coverdale, and the exiles in Geneva – has survived in the Authorised Version to make it an authentic testament to the English Reformation; the Reformation of faith, that is, rather than that of political convenience. And this is where our own roots lie as a denomination.

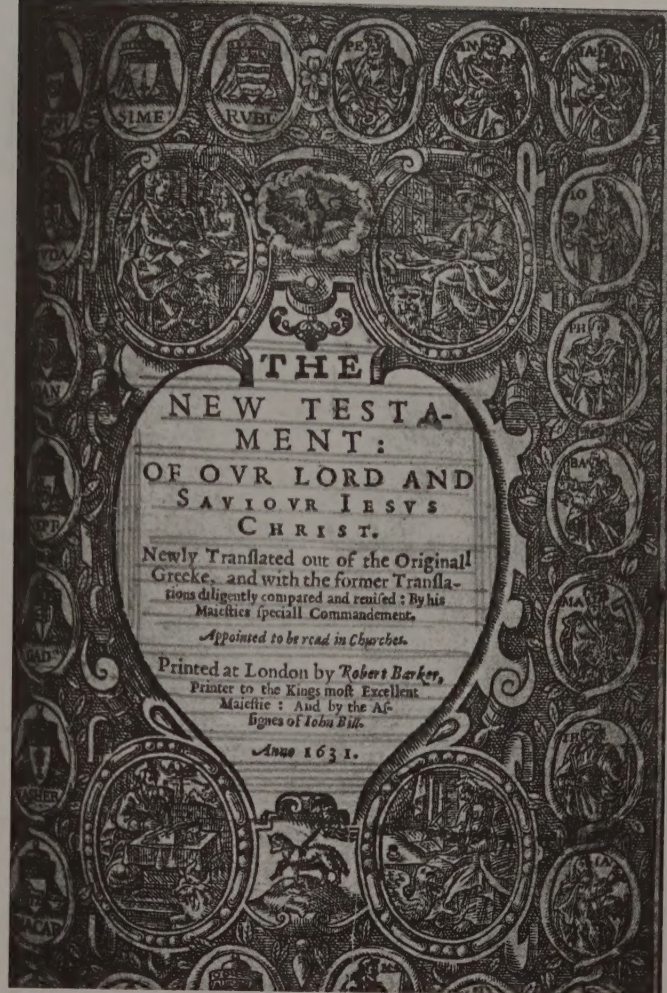
Although we should value the Authorised Version of the Bible, we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking (as some do) that it is always a more accurate translation than the best of the modern ones, although sometimes it is, and no translation is perfect anyway! The Old Testament is a work of *Hebrew* sacred literature, just as the New Testament was written in *Greek*, the language of the Early Church. Paul didn't write to the Corinthian church about 'love', he wrote about 'agape'. John didn't write about 'the Word', he wrote about 'Logos', and much can be lost in translation!

Rediscover riches

In our tradition of liberal Reformed Protestant Christianity, we have particular reason to be thankful for all those who worked and, in cases like Tyndale's, suffered and died, to give us the English Bible. We may not see it quite as they did 400 or 500 years ago, but as the foundation stone of our religion and culture, as a continuing spiritual resource of truth and wisdom, as a treasury of profound myths and stirring stories, and, as witness to the voice of God speaking through generations of faithful and not-so-faithful people, it is indispensable to a rooted, informed, and even inspired community of the Spirit.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has urged us to read the 1611 Authorised Version this year and to rediscover its riches. I would not dissent from that, but it is rediscovering and reclaiming the Bible itself that matters most – be it in the Authorised Version, in Tyndale's, or in a good modern translation.

The Rev Clifford M Reed is minister at Ipswich.



1631 Holy Bible, Robert Barker/John Bill, London. King James Version

King James Bible facts

- The animal most frequently mentioned in the Old Testament is the sheep, followed by the lamb, lion, ox, ram, horse, bullock, ass, goat and camel.
- The most common name is David, which occurs over a thousand times. The longest name in the Bible, however, is that of Isaiah's son Mahershalalhashbaz.
- The words 'girl' and 'girls' each occur only once in the entire Authorised Version. The word 'eternity' also occurs only once in the Bible.
- Apples are the fourth most often mentioned fruit in the Bible, though the forbidden fruit that led to Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden is nowhere referred to specifically as an apple.
- The word 'buttocks' occurs only three times in the King James Bible: once each in the Second Book of Samuel, the First Book of Chronicles, and the Book of Isaiah. There are no buttocks in the New Testament.
- There is no mention of carpets in the Bible.
- To reproduce the biblical description of Noah's Flood, one inch of rain would have to fall every second for 40 days without any evaporation.
- Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia nibbled a few pages of the Bible whenever he became ill. In December 1913 he ate the entire Book of Kings when convalescing after a stroke, and died.
- Pomegranates are the third most frequently mentioned fruit in the King James Bible, with 33 references to them. Only olives (59 references) and grapes (49 references) are mentioned more frequently.

Source: Cambridge University Press materials promoting *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today*, by David Norton.

Transylvania congregation



The Rev Csaba Kecskes with communion vessels at his Second Unitarian Church in Marosvasarhely. The two chalices on the right were donated by Norwich. All photos by Jim Corrigan

By Jim Corrigan

The Unitarian Deputy Bishop of Transylvania suddenly turned to me and exclaimed: 'Look, partnerships between churches in our two countries are not about the money – that's not what's important to us!'

We were making our way along a narrow hillside path towards the whitewashed steeple of one of Transylvania's oldest Unitarian churches. As a British Unitarian visitor, I'd been explaining why so few of our congregations still have links with Transylvania (unlike American Unitarian Universalists, who provide substantial aid).

British congregations are small, I'd been saying, and our members are mainly impecunious. But the Deputy Bishop, Laszlo Nagy, wanted to see it through their eyes. 'What we value,' he told me, 'is the connections, the exchanges, the dialogue.'

The Deputy Bishop pointed to the partnership between the Octagon Chapel in Norwich and a congregation in Marosvasarhely, the region's second city. Through this link, young Transylvanians had recently visited Britain, while Norwich Unitarians make regular trips out.

Norwich Unitarians provided some financial support for building work at the partner church, and they recently donated two communion chalices (highly prized, as communion remains important for Transylvanian Unitarians). But Norwich today seems to be our only congregation with such a programme (although there were several in the past).

As a ministerial student at Oxford, I had the good fortune to visit Transylvania in the spring, on a travel bursary. I saw the bigger centres and also valleys and small villages where almost everyone is a Unitarian, and I went up into the beautiful Carpathian mountains. I visited the two schools run by Unitarians, and the seminary where ministers are trained; I met church leaders and congregational members, and received tremendous hospitality throughout.

Sole survivors of the Reformation

The earliest surviving Unitarian community in the world is found in Transylvania, dating back to the Reformation of the 16th century, and it is the only place in Continental Europe where Unitarians survived the religious persecution of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. So why did the Unitarians survive in Transylvania alone?

This was chiefly because of a Proclamation of 1568 known as the Diet of Torda, which proclaimed religious tolerance and freedom of conscience. It gave recognition and protection to four

religions in Transylvania: Catholic, Reformed (or Calvinist), Lutheran and Unitarian. A Unitarian Bishop, Francis David, played the key role in the debate at the Diet of Torda. Happily the Prince of Transylvania at that time, János Sigismund, was a Unitarian too – and so the edict became part of the Constitution. But the Prince died shortly afterwards, being succeeded by a Catholic: and restrictions began to be placed

on Unitarians.

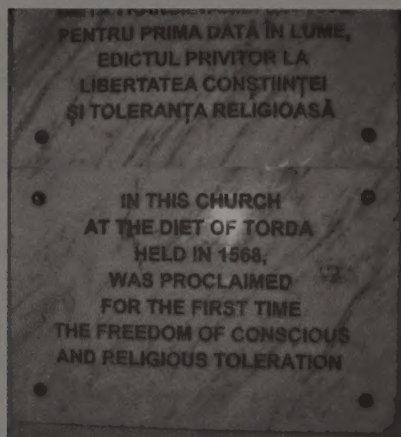
In fact, varying degrees of persecution were to continue against them over the next 200 to 300 years – and later under Communism in the latter part of last century, when all religions were restricted. But the fact that Unitarians retained a constitutional right to exist, together with their strong sense of identity, enabled them to survive in Transylvania through the centuries.

From early days, the Unitarian theology of Francis David in Transylvania was far-reaching, similar to modern Unitarianism: that God is One, not a Trinity, and that Jesus was not God, simply a man, albeit God's greatest teacher – we should therefore follow his teachings, but not worship him.

A geographic point to note is that Transylvania was part of Hungary during the Reformation, and most of those living there were Hungarian. Transylvania was to remain part of Hungary until after the First World War, when it was granted to Romania as one of the Western allies.

However, the Hungarian population there retains a powerful sense of identity: they've kept their language, their customs and their faith – and this at a time when more and more Romanians have come into Transylvania to settle. Romanians are now the majority there, and are overwhelmingly Romanian Orthodox in religion.

– Jim Corrigan



The plaque commemorating the Proclamation of 1568 on religious tolerance, inside the historic church.

seek partners

Transylvanian Unitarians feel quite isolated, and would value strong links with our denomination and our congregations in Britain. How we contribute to this?

Well, our congregations could consider establishing (or re-establish) links with Transylvanian churches. It is advisable to visit Transylvania first – and travel there is relatively easy and cheap, as is food and accommodation.

Low budget airlines fly to both the main centres in Transylvania: Cluj-Napoca (its Hungarian name is Kolozsvár) and Tîrgu-Mureş (in Hungary it's Marosvásárhely). Several Unitarian churches and centres offer accommodation, although sometimes this is more suited to younger people.

Even in the western Carpathians above the historic town of Torda, I had access to a modern, well-run hotel/guest house. The rooms all seemed to have mountain views – this would be an excellent centre for mountain sports and exploring Unitarian villages and landmarks (it is close to the town of Kolozsvár). In a neighbouring village, traditional cottages can be rented on a self-catering basis.

Car hire is fairly easy, and although some roads (particularly going to the villages) are potholed, they are passable (I know this from experience!).

Whether you travel to Transylvania to check out partnership possibilities, or for a holiday with a strong Unitarian flavour, you will receive a warm welcome. It is advisable to contact the Transylvanian Unitarians first, and I will be happy to give contact details for anyone wishing to go out there – individually or as a group. Email me on: jcorrigall.myzen.co.uk

Jim Corrigan is a ministry student at Harris Manchester College, Oxford



... and Unitarian Church in Marosvásárhely (partner to Norwich Unitarians) ... modernism with Transylvanian echoes.

Unitarian challenges

Unitarians in Transylvania number about 60,000; it's the second largest Unitarian community in the world after the United States (which is numerically two or three times bigger). Unitarians make up almost 5% of the Hungarian population of Transylvania, yet their faith has a unique recognition and status.

Transylvanian Unitarians are certainly different in many respects from their British counterparts. For a start, they have a Bishop (and a Deputy Bishop), but in fact the Church is basically Reformed in character.

Unitarians here remain deeply Christian in their beliefs and practice, albeit a dissenting branch of Christianity. Church life is highly organised, there is a Unitarian creed and catechism, both of which affirm a basic Unitarian theology. Youngsters learn the catechism for a year before they can be confirmed within the church, and only after this can they partake of communion. This is regarded seriously, and is held four times a year: at Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Sunday morning services remain almost unchanged since Reformation times, Word-dominated in the best Protestant tradition. The Minister, dressed in a black cloak, stands in the high pulpit almost the entire time. From there, he or she (yes, there are women ministers) leads prayer, Bible readings and delivers a lengthy sermon.

There are about 130 Unitarian congregations in Transylvania, and they have just over 110 ministers, so many more serving ministers than we have.

However, Transylvanian Unitarians face real problems. Theirs is a family religion, passed down through the generations, you are born a Unitarian and you die one; converts to the faith are extremely rare. This is both a strength and a weakness. They have a strong core, but it is difficult to expand beyond this.

Economically, Romania today is in a bad way – it seems to have endured some of the worst of communism and now of capitalism. Most of the inefficient factories closed after the fall of communism, but they have not been replaced. Agriculture is not being supported either. So migration to Europe for work claims scores of younger people. The Unitarians are losing about a thousand members each year, that's 10,000 in the past decade.

A second problem is that although the young attend Sunday school and confirmation, nowadays they drift away afterwards. They are as much part of the internet age as young people elsewhere – and they say they find Unitarian services boring. Historically, congregational life was limited.

But I found that Unitarians in Transylvania are resisting decline in a number of ways. One of their great assets is a vigorous ministry. Ministers are very aware of the challenges facing their denomination, and they seem full of the energy and intelligence needed to tackle these.

How are they going about this? Well, firstly by reviving church life, introducing spiritual and cultural activities within congregations and communities. More ministers are being trained, with the aim of providing more deputies in the bigger congregations, to ease ministers' heavy workloads.

Most particularly, they are trying to re-engage with their young. Experimental services are now held on Sunday evenings in two big centres to attract the youth; about 35 attended the one I went to in Kolozsvár. It was certainly different – singing with guitars and drums, film clips on screens, a colourful banner with a large flaming chalice (– this international Unitarian symbol has been unpopular with Transylvanian Unitarians, as candles represent Catholicism). There is also an active youth programme, in congregations and nationally.

– Jim Corrigan

Keeping an eye on our first cousins

I usually refer to the Quakers as our spiritual first cousins. A sort of first-cousin-once-removed from the Christian to the Jewish tradition, might be the Liberal Jews, presently celebrating the centenary of their 'flagship congregation', in St John's Wood Road, London. An important distinction for them is that whereas traditional Jews insist on matrilineal descent – that is if your mother is Jewish then you are Jewish – Liberal Jews are happy to call someone a Jew whose father is Jewish. Another significant characteristic is their inclusive attitude to gays and lesbians. They have been fellow campaigners with us and the Quakers for the right to hold civil partnership ceremonies in places of worship.

One relatively new Liberal Jewish group, called *Beit Klal Yisrael* (House for All Israel), was founded by a group of lesbian feminists, 'determined to create a Jewish community that welcomed and celebrated lesbian and gay life'. They have participated in Pride marches, the International Women's Day march, pre-Copenhagen Climate Change protest, an anti-Fascist - anti-EDL (English Defence League) rally and the women's Reclaim the Night rally.

And where does this group meet? Why, Essex Church, the home of Kensington Unitarians, of course.

* * *

Manchester's Liberal Jews have met regularly at Cross Street Unitarian Chapel for some years, very appreciative of the hospitality. At their rabbi's induction last November, the congregation included representatives of 'our fellow liberals in faith the Unitarians and Quakers', said their report.

The chair of their congregation one day told me how thrilled they were to have obtained their own sacred Torah scrolls, which form the focal point of their worship services. 'In the past, for our High Holy Day services, we have had to borrow scrolls from another synagogue. Now at last we have our own!' she said, the joy evident in her face.

'That's wonderful,' I said. 'Tell me, just out of interest, where did you get these scrolls from?'

'Oh, we bought them on eBay!' she replied.

The last time I saw her she had joined *Roundelay*, the choir based at Cross Street Chapel and was there among the sopranos at the Easter Morning service.

* * *

Most of my Jewish friendships have been with Reform Jews, another first-cousin-once-removed, I think. One tit-bit picked up in an interfaith discussion is something I think we could use, if needed. We were talking about tradition, recognised as a powerful presence in Judaism, as those who have seen *Fiddler on the Roof* will remember. I quoted Garrison Keillor, a favourite writer, who, talking about his fictional creation, the very Christian town of Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, said of it, 'It's a place where tradition is important, and sometimes all we have.' I have pondered that a lot.

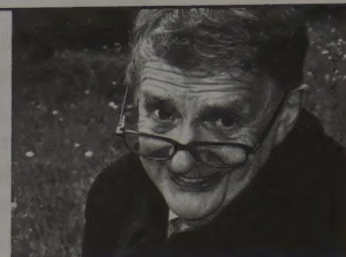
A response from a Reform Jew stuck in my mind, partly because of its anagrammatically memorable character. 'Among Reform Jews,' she said, 'tradition has a vote, but not a veto.'

* * *

Another anniversary this year is 190 years of *The Guardian*, which I still think of as the Unitarian newspaper. Founded by

Funny Old World

By
John Midgley



Unitarians, initially as a weekly, in response to the Peterloo Massacre, it has always stood aside from and often against conservative conventional wisdom, notably supporting votes for women, opposing the Boer war concentration camps and much more. Its famous editor, CP Scott, who held the post for over 50 years, was certainly a Unitarian. One of the current associate editors, Ian Mayes, is working on the next volume of the history of the paper, and has been looking into its Unitarian past. He has visited Essex Hall and Harris Manchester College and I enjoyed a friendly chat with him when he called in at Cross Street Chapel, which stands only a few yards from the original home of what was then called *The Manchester Guardian*. The name was changed when the office was moved to London.

He asked if I thought C P Scott's 1921 dictum, 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred', still held good. Not an easy question in these days of media spin. Facts are not easy to discern, so perhaps the dictum merits serious re-consideration. Maybe that is why *The Guardian* calls its blog, *Comment is Free*...

One *Manchester Guardian* piece, recently reproduced from an 1821 issue, described the grim scene of the public hanging of three criminals, one for robbery, one for burglary and 'a youth, apparently about 17' for passing a forged £10 note. Shuddering at this, I ponder whether another, later slogan, much loved by Unitarians at one time but now more often derided, *The progress of mankind, onward and upward forever*, might have some truth in it after all. Not only would we today be outraged at such a grotesque punishment of a youngster for such a comparatively minor offence, we have progressed to the abolition of the death penalty altogether, with no sign of its return.

* * *

The aforementioned Cross Street Chapel enjoyed a neighbourly Palm Sunday lunchtime visit from the Very Rev Rogers Govender, Dean of Manchester. A South African of Indian origin, he spoke of his experiences as a young priest in the apartheid era, recalling his appointments to parishes in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg, where the parsonages were in 'white' areas. To live there, as a black man, he was required to obtain a permit, a requirement with which he refused to comply.

As for experiences in city centre Manchester, he mentioned the St George's day event at the cathedral, which featured a large puppet depicting England's patron saint as a black man. There is, of course, a distinct possibility that George was not exactly white, being of Eastern Mediterranean extraction. However, this characterisation brought hate mail to the cathedral from far right political groups, not for the first time. With his South African experience, I'm sure the Dean dealt appropriately with that dragon.

Cyclists raised money for youth



Start to finish: The Rev David Usher gives the cyclists a blessing and a send-off at Croydon. And they arrive happily on Brighton Pier. Below: Celebrations at Ditchling. Photos by James Barry.

The 11th of June might not have been a very significant day for you but for seven dedicated, trained, adrenaline pumped Unitarians it was the day of our sponsored bike ride from London to Brighton – a mere 50 miles. We started officially at Croydon Unitarian Meeting House where we received a lovely blessing from the Rev David Usher (who claimed he regretfully couldn't join us). The first half seemed to fly by for me but even so, we were all very relieved to stop for lunch after climbing (i.e. walking) up the steep, winding Turner's Hill.

About 10 miles from the end we collapsed gratefully into the open arms of the Ditchling Unitarians who had prepared a wonderful array of snacks. We also celebrated John Harley's birthday – what a way to spend it, raising money for your church's youth programme! After we refreshed ourselves, we



reluctantly departed and cycled towards our impending doom: the infamous Ditchling Beacon – a long, steep, winding road that gradually climbs to the top of the South Downs. Eventually we all made it up and it was definitely worth it; the view was breathtaking. Following this, we relished the relaxed, easy descent down into Brighton where we ground to a halt for fish and chips on the pier... and topped it all off with a much needed drink at the pub!

I'd just like to congratulate and say a massive thanks to John Harley, Liz Hills, Janet Costley, Matthew Holdsworth, Mandy Richards and Lori Winters for helping raise money for the youth, and also to James Barry for being our official photographer and back up in the car.

– Annabel Kramer – aged 15



Thanks for a great birthday celebration

I don't know if it was David Usher's blessing or the coffee and croissants and good cheer provided by Croydon Unitarians that sustained us up the hills and beyond! There were a few adventures along the way including attempting to rescue a driver whose car had fallen into a country ditch and some expert, or rather hopeful, cycle maintenance in the form of trying to stop one of the bikes from mysteriously clicking and losing most of its gears. I will never forget Ditchling Unitarians' warm welcome and lavish tea (and Thomas the Tank Engine

bunting). We are hugely indebted to James Barry's technical bike knowledge, huge encouragement from the Hill family (an uncannily appropriate name in the circumstances!) and Liz Hills' (there we go again) map reading skills. There is already talk of a repeat performance next year so watch this space (we just may have recovered by then). If you would like to sponsor 'Cycle for Youth' contact me at jharley@unitarian.org.uk or write to me c/o Essex Hall (address on page 2).

– John Harley – Youth Coordinator

Emotional Intelligence – ‘Good E.I.dea’

Many Unitarians volunteer to serve existing community organisations. Andrea Clark-Ward, a member at the Frenchay Chapel, Bristol, recognised an unmet need amongst inner-city children, and founded her own, the Good E.I.dea Voluntary Association, 12 years ago.

Andrea was brought up amongst the Plymouth Brethren but quit them – and indeed religion itself – when she went to college. Later, as a young mother looking for roots for her child, she turned to the liberal wing of the Church of England, led spiritual discussions in its Sunday School and joined Jubilee 2000 and other campaigns. When an evangelical priest took over, she left. It was then, about 10 years ago, that she went to the Frenchay Chapel at the instigation of a neighbour who was providing support there after Frank Clabburn's sudden death. 'I was amazed,' she says, 'at the language of the services and the variety of speakers, and the connectedness of music and poetry and life issues, and links to other faiths.' 'I have been something of an evangelist for Unitarians ever since,' she adds.

Here Andrea explains her work in fostering emotional intelligence and social skills amongst disadvantaged (and in some ways stunted) children. Included in these, she says, are solid values which are similar to spiritual values – caring, sharing, listening, cooperation, respect for oneself and for others.

– Kate Taylor

There are increasing numbers of children and young people from dysfunctional backgrounds who are growing up lacking the personal, social and emotional skills to live fulfilling lives. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we now understand what is happening and have the means of helping such children. Developments in psychology and neuroscience clearly show the importance of the inter-relationship between our physical, intellectual and emotional growth. Ignore any one, and there will be problems; neglect the emotional development of the young and, just like a building with poor foundations, compensating the damage can take a lifetime.

Anyone interacting regularly with children needs to be aware of the huge positive difference he or she can make to the lives of the young, especially in the way they respond to them. A consistent, positive approach based on respect and understanding within mutually agreed boundaries can work and does work wonders! In this way, children can grow in confidence, build on their strengths, tackle their weaknesses and make and keep friendships by making good choices.

However, this is not the experience of most vulnerable children. While personal, social, health and emotional (PSHE) development is now included in the school curriculum, it is generally taught to whole classes. Vulnerable children do not readily respond in such large sessions and often the effect is negative and they find themselves less empowered.



Helping Hands

Traditionally many Unitarians have worked in a voluntary capacity for the good of the wider society. They still do. In this series we shall focus on just a few of them who are demonstrating the social responsibility that is one of the threads of Unitarianism. To suggest a volunteer's story, contact Kate Taylor on:

kate@airtime.co.uk

For many years, I have worked with inner-city children from dysfunctional backgrounds, and through experience, have found that progress can be made. However, there is no quick fix and set backs are very much part of the process. The key is to build trusting relationships through individual and small group activities sharing personal experiences and including creativity and fun. The adults are 'facilitators', not leaders, who encourage and appreciate the children's endeavours and provide a safe and caring environment, guiding and reassuring each child's step along the way.

A group of children I began working with when some were only 5 or 6, are now in their late teens. In the early days, a group of about eight met for three hours every other Saturday when we played games, shared life experiences, dealt with anxiety and other emotional behaviour issues. We slowly learned to enjoy a healthy meal together sat around a table. In the holidays, we went on trips to the seaside, country parks and adventure centres. There was a great deal of laughter but also tears and quarrels as the children had poor language and listening skills, low self-esteem, little self-control of their emotions and were often unable to share and play happily together.

An initial assessment predicted that most of the children I started work with would fail at school, engage in anti-social behaviour, face problems from drug abuse and have a criminal record by the time they reached adulthood. The positive news is that this has not been the case. We continued to meet when they moved to secondary school but less frequently, going on trips to the theatre, museums and for other social events, as well as discussing problems individually, sometimes face-to-face but often on the phone. While some have moved away from the area, I am still in contact with them all. Our friendship continues and they are not isolates or outcasts.

Unfortunately, there are not enough opportunities for needy children to take part in individual and small group activities under the guidance of experienced adults. A few years ago, along with a few friends, we formed a voluntary association to promote this work, appropriately named 'Good E.I. d.e.a.' (Good Emotional Intelligence Development through the Expressive Arts). We run a training workshop called 'Linking Hearts and Minds', and give potential adult facilitators the chance to work on projects with children under the guidance of experienced practitioners. This year's aim is to find a patron and six trustees, to enable us to move into charity status. Enquiries from anyone wanting to know more or to volunteer are always welcome, so please get in contact. We may be making a very small difference in the wider world but the happiness factors of a few children are literally life changing. Preventive action for young children can save society enormous costs in the future.

Reach Andrea Clark-Ward on 0117 9565 826 or 17791 119 685. Kate Taylor is a member at Wakefield.

The fine art of a listening heart

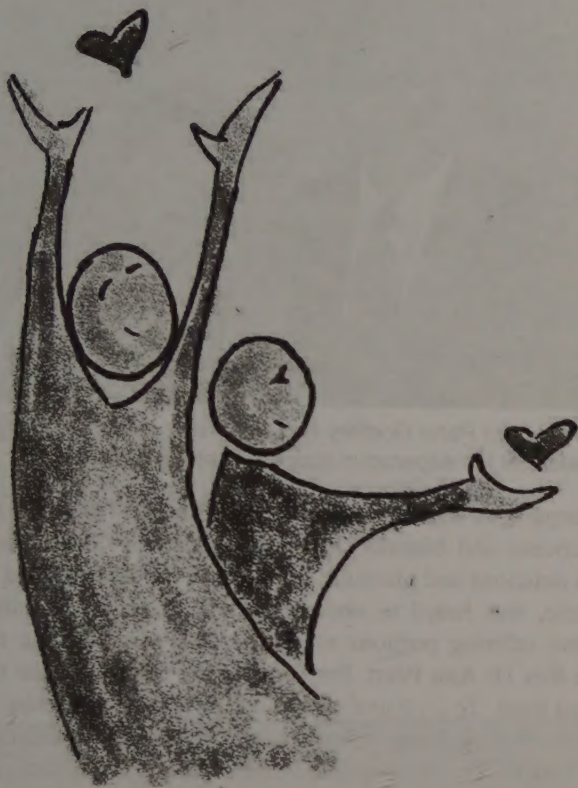


Illustration by Amy Burton

By Danny Crosby

I am often asked why I entered into the ministry; it happened several times at this year's General Assembly Annual meetings. It's a good question to ask any minister and it was particularly appropriate this year as I was being formerly recognised. That said, it is a question that I always feel reluctant to answer, it often fills me with dread. Why? Well the reason is that my journey began with agonising, horrific grief; my journey began as I attempted to come to terms with a great loss. The death of my dear friend Claire's son Ethan and all that followed is truly what cast me down the road to Unitarian ministry. Love and loss and finally putting the pieces back together, is what compelled me down this path. As I tried to come to terms with my own grief, while attempting to be there for Claire, I was held and supported by my own minister, the Rev John Midgley. He was present with a kind heart and a listening ear. He was there the day that Ethan was killed and over the weeks and months that followed. He said very little that I can remember, but he did listen. It cannot have been easy.

A single tear

To me this was a great example of pastoral ministry. John listened and he was there. Claire often tells me how seeing a single tear in his eye at Ethan's funeral held her through some very dark days. He was no robot, merely going through the motions; there was deep compassion in his presence.

I have now been with the good folk of Altrincham and Urmston since August and I feel that we have got to know one another quite well. From the outset I made it a priority of mine to spend time talking, but above all else listening, to them. During the worship we have shared I have encouraged openness by allowing them to get to know me. Worship for me must always be speak the language of the heart and not just feed the

intellect. This may well have been a challenge for some folk, but was a deliberate decision on my part in an attempt to give those present permission to be open with me.

Spending time is key

I have pretty much spent time with everyone connected with both congregations, visiting them in their own homes and talking with them about many things. This has been a real treasure to me, personally. We have some real gems hidden away in our congregations. I cannot begin to express how deeply moved I have been by what people have shared with me. Virtually every conversation has been littered with moving stories of love, of pain, of grief and of faith. I have heard some of the most incredible tales of personal spiritual experience, something I have personal interest in. I have rarely left someone's home without feeling that my life has been enhanced by the time we have just shared. I have felt welcomed into the lives of the people within both communities and for that I am profoundly grateful.

One of my favourite hymns 'All Are Welcome Here' reads 'All are welcome here...all are welcome to seek in spite of fear...to open wide to all our hearts...for all are welcome here.' For me, the purpose of our faith is to build communities of love that encourage that search for understanding and meaning, that search beyond the confines of ourselves; we are about building communities that encourage each of us as individuals to continue that search but to do so together, unconstrained. For me the key to creating this welcome and fostering it amongst ourselves is in the listening; the key is to listen with the 'ears of our hearts.'

The ear of your heart

'Listen with the ear of your heart', has become one of my mantras over the last few months. It comes from 'The Rule of Benedict' a set of ancient principles for monastic orders, followed by many Christian and some Buddhist communities today. The foundation of the rule is listening, deep attentive listening. It begins, 'Listen carefully, my child, to the instructions...and attend to them with the ear of your heart'. What is required is deep listening, a concept proposed, in contemporary times, by the Dalai Lama.

This has become the foundation of my ministry, to 'listen with the ear of my heart' and to encourage that in others. Of course I often fall short of this mark as I get wrapped up in many things, some important but many trivial. That is OK though, one of my other mantras is 'progress not perfection'.

The reason I came into ministry is to keep open my own heart and to encourage others to do likewise.

The Rev Danny Crosby (right) is minister at Urmston and Altrincham.



Asparagus camouflaged faith

Evesham's Oat Street Unitarian Chapel was humming on Wednesday, 11 May...

Forty-one people from nine Unitarian congregations from all over the Midlands continued the tradition of meeting during Evesham's asparagus season for an 'Asparagus Lunch'.

The meeting began in 1782 as 'cover' for a then illegal get-together of non-conformist ministers. The *'Warwickshire and Neighbouring Counties Monthly Meeting of Protestant Dissenting Ministers (1782)'* – affectionately known as 'Ministers' Meeting' – now consists of current and retired ministers and lay leaders of Unitarian congregations in the Midlands, and still hosts the event at Oat Street, with the willing cooperation of the Chapel's congregation.

After the company had gathered for coffee and greeted old friends and new in the chapel's gatehouse, the Rev Dr Peter Godfrey (current Chair of the Ministers' Meeting) treated us to an inspiring service on the subject of 'happiness', including a reading by Kath Forder of a Jerusalem Bible version of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1-10), which replaced the usual *'Blessed are...'* with *'Happy are'*.

The Rev Ant Howe (Minister at Kingswood and at Warwick) accompanied us on the organ with his usual flair; his joyous postlude had feet tapping, and we went back to the gatehouse for lunch smiling.

After a welcome by Oat Street Chair Dr Peter Forder, and grace by the Rev Don Phillips, (Minister to Cotswold Group, which includes Oat Street), we tucked into a choice of chicken princess with white wine and asparagus sauce or



The Rev Drs Peter Godfrey and Ann Peart celebrated religious freedom at the asparagus supper. Photo by Peter Forder

an asparagus and mushroom risotto, followed by fruit salad or cheese and biscuits. Lunch, provided by local caterers, was delicious and plentiful; one person, on being served with cheese, was heard to observe 'It's a ploughman's lunch!', before offering portions of cheese to the rest of the table. The Rev Dr Ann Peart, President of the GA, made the traditional toast *'To civil and religious liberty the world over'*. All involved were thanked, and coffee and mints served, before the hum of conversation faded and a replete, happy group said its goodbyes and wended its way home.

– Kath Forder

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